

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH PIERRE SALINGER

OCTOBER 23, 1962

12:05 P.M. EDT

TUESDAY

MR. SALINGER: I really have nothing except most of you were not here this morning at 9:00 o'clock when I announced that the President has constituted an Executive Committee of the National Security Council which will meet daily at 10:00 a.m. for the foreseeable future to discuss information and other problems arising out of the current situation.

The Executive Committee is made up of the President as Chairman, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Attorney General, the Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Q. Was the Secretary of State here this morning, Pierre?

MR. SALINGER: He was not. He was at the OAS this morning. He arrived, as I understand, at the tag end of the meeting this morning.

Q. Who was this?

MR. SALINGER: The Secretary of State.

Q. The Secretary of the Treasury is still in Mexico, isn't he?

MR. SALINGER: He is on his way back from Mexico City.

Q. How long did the meeting last this morning, Pierre?

MR. SALINGER: I would say the meeting lasted about an hour and 20 minutes this morning.

Q. Did either Secretary Rusk or Dillon have representatives here?

MR. SALINGER: There were State Department representatives there; yes. There was nobody from the Treasury this

Q. How does this differ from the regular Security Council, Pierre?

MR. SALINGER: There are a great many other people at most National Security Council meetings.

Q. Pursuing my question, that is what I want to know. When this group meets, then, do the other people meet along with them?

MR. SALINGER: They are not meeting with them during this. This is an especially constituted Executive Committee to deal with this problem.

Q. Aren't these people all statutory members?

MR. SALINGER: Not all of them are statutory members.

Q. Except Dillon.

MR. SALINGER: No. There is, for example, a statutory member who is not a member of the Executive Committee, the Director of the Office of Emergency Planning.

Q. You didn't mention the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

MR. SALINGER: I did mention the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

Q. He is the only one of the Joint Chiefs who will be there?

MR. SALINGER: He is the member of this Executive Committee. I am sure that there will be full National Security Council meetings during this period as well, but this is a daily meeting which the President set up.

Q. Pierre, will Mr. Bundy be in on these normally?

MR. SALINGER: Yes, sir.

Q. Pierre, has the United States Government received the text of the Soviet Government's statement issued this morning?

MR. SALINGER: As of now, only through the services of the news agencies, including Tass.

Q. Pierre, any other White House aides at these special meetings?

MR. SALINGER: There will be other aides in and out, but I wouldn't want to specify.

Q. Was it sent? Was a message sent?

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Q. Did either Secretary Rusk or Dillon have representatives here?

MR. SALINGER: There were State Department representatives there; yes. There was nobody from the Treasury this morning.

Q. Does this mean that other persons who have been sitting in on the Security Council meetings now will not be present when this group meets?

MR. SALINGER: This is an executive committee of the National Security Council.

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Q. You said, Pierre, there were State Department representatives this morning. Can you tell us who they were?

MR. SALINGER: I believe Mr. Thompson was there this morning.

Q. Pierre, what is the status of the formal proclamation required from the President before this quarantine can be invoked?

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MR. SALINGER: I will give you further information on that before the day is out.

Q. Can you give us an approximate time, Pierre?

MR. SALINGER: I cannot.

Q. Is this because of requirements of international law?

MR. SALINGER: I wouldn't want to comment on that. I will have further to say on that later in the day.

Q. Is there any consideration of calling Congress back for additional money, or do you have sufficient funds for the emergency?

MR. SALINGER: There is no present thought of calling Congress back.

Q. Are you still going on the Brazil trip?

MR. SALINGER: There is no change in the status of the Brazil trip as of now.

Q. When is that?

MR. SALINGER: November 12 to 14.

Q. There has been no formal communication by the Soviet Union to the White House?

Q. What was the question?

MR. SALINGER: Miss Thomas' question was that there had been no formal communication by the Soviet Union to the White House. The wire services report that the American Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Mr. Kohler, was called in to the Soviet Foreign Office this morning and given a statement. That statement was released simultaneously by the wires and is being carried on the wires now, but we have not received the formal text as it was received by Mr. Kohler, as of now.

Q. Has the President heard from either of the three former Presidents he talked to yesterday following his speech last night or this morning?

MR. SALINGER: He received a telegram from President Truman this morning. I did not see telegrams from the other two Presidents.

Q. Can you give us the text of the telegram?

Q. Pierre, would it be correct to assume that any reaction of the United States Government to the Soviet Government's statement will be held until you receive the official text?

MR. SALINGER: We will want to study the official text as we receive it from our Ambassador. I would think there would be no comment prior to that.

Q. Has the White House been closed to tourists?

MR. SALINGER: No, sir; it has not. The Secret Service has instituted a new procedure for tourists. All it requires is that tourists check cameras and packages as they come in through the East Gate. There has been a trailer set up at the East Gate for checking packages and cameras, but tourists are still going through the White House in large numbers.

Q. When did that start, Pierre?

MR. SALINGER: This morning.

Q. Is it permanent or temporary?

MR. SALINGER: I can't tell you the duration of it. The system is now in effect.

Q. Have the White House Police leaves and days off been cancelled for a while?

MR. SALINGER: That I don't know.

Q. Pierre, some of these revolutionists, men here in Washington interviewed in them, from down in Cuba, last January, I think about the 13th, and they said the build-up was in progress at that time.

MR. SALINGER: Who said that?

Q. Some of these Cuban leaders in Miami. And there was a news story going around. I mean, I saw it published. That is, that there was a build-up at this time in Cuba, in which they very well outlined what the President said about it last night. Did the Administration know of such?

MR. SALINGER: I think the President made the Government's position very clear last night.

Q. Pierre, is it correct to assume that the Government will make no attempt to stop and search any vessel or plane until the President's proclamation is issued?

MR. SALINGER: I am not prepared to answer that.

Q. Is this because of requirements of international law?

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Q. Can you give us the text of the telegram?

MR. SALINGER: No, I think it was addressed personally to the President.

Q. Can you tell us something about it?

MR. SALINGER: Well, it was along the lines of the statement the President issued last night in Hutchinson, Kansas, in which he approved the President's actions.

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MR. SALINGER: I am not prepared to answer that question.

Q. Any word about Reservists being called up?

MR. SALINGER: No, sir. I will probably be able to give you more on it this afternoon.

Q. Pierre, could you give us, the best you can, any guide lines about timing for today? Number 1, do you advise us

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to stay here through the lunch period?

Number 2, what time do you approximate --

MR. SALINGER: No, we will have a lid after this briefing and we will keep the lid in effect until approximately 2:00 p.m.

Q. Pierre, will the President go on radio or TV to issue this proclamation?

MR. SALINGER: That I can't answer either at the moment, Bob.

Q. Pierre, to follow this point up about the approximate timing after, do you anticipate what you have to say will come here before 6:00 o'clock or after 6:00 o'clock?

MR. SALINGER: That, again, I can't pinpoint with any accuracy, although my guess would be that it will be prior to 6:00.

Q. What will be prior to 6:00?

MR. SALINGER: Anything I might say about the proclamation.

Q. On the Executive Order on shipping, when is that due -- today or tomorrow, or is that part of the proclamation?

MR. SALINGER: Well, I again will defer on that question until later today.

Q. Pierre, have there been any incidents at sea or at Guantanamo?

MR. SALINGER: That is a question I think you should more properly direct to the Defense Department. I am unaware of any.

Q. How are you keeping in touch with the leaders of Congress?

MR. SALINGER: Well, they are here in town and they are available if the President should want to call them back in for further consultation.

Q. Has he?

MR. SALINGER: He has not.

Q. Are they staying in town?

Q. Can you answer my question first -- how long the leaders are going to stay here?

MR. SALINGER: I don't think any definite time has been set, Bill.

Q. Pierre, looking ahead, suppose there is what we would call an "incident" in the waters around Cuba. Where will that be handled? Here, the Pentagon, or where?

MR. SALINGER: That is something being determined at the present time. I won't be able to tell you that for a little while yet, either.

Q. Can you give us an indication of whether the President is directly involved now with this problem that the Pan American Airways has, that Cuba has denied them permission to leave Cuba, and I don't know whether this was brought to the attention of the President or who would be handling it.

MR. SALINGER: I can't answer that specific question.

Q. Can you answer how many American citizens are now in Cuba?

MR. SALINGER: I cannot answer that question. The State Department might have some indication.

Q. Can you tell us something about the President's day, how late he was up last night?

MR. SALINGER: The President was up until after midnight. He came into his office shortly after 9:00 this morning. As far as I know, he had no meetings last night after his speech.

Q. Was the Attorney General with him late last night?

MR. SALINGER: Not that I know of.

Q. How is his cold?

MR. SALINGER: His cold seems fine.

Q. Do you have anything on public reaction?

MR. SALINGER: We have received at the White House as of now, and they are coming in at a great rate, more than 4000 telegrams. The ratio is running about 12 to 1 in favor of the President's action.

Q. Pierre, have you received through official channels anything to corroborate on doing the comments that have

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Q. Has he?

MR. SALINGER: He has not.

Q. Are they staying in town?

MR. SALINGER: They are staying in town. They were asked to stay in town.

Q. Was there any time limit, Pierre?

MR. SALINGER: There was no time limit.

Q. Can you give us an indication of whether the President is now involved --

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Q. Pierre, have you received through official channels anything to corroborate or deny the reports that have been broadcast and perhaps published in the last 12 hours to the effect that Khrushchev says that Russian ships will go through if challenged?

MR. SALINGER: I couldn't give you anything on that.

Q. You can't say whether it has been officially --

MR. SALINGER: I wouldn't want to comment on that.

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Q. Pierre, will the pictures that were shown last night at the Pentagon briefing to newsmen be released?

MR. SALINGER: Let me go OFF THE RECORD, if I can.

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We are studying in the government the possibility and advisability of making some of those pictures public. They will not be made public today. There is a chance of their being made public tomorrow.

Q. Will they be shown at the UN today?

MR. SALINGER: I can't tell you that.

* * * * *

Q. Are Mrs. Kennedy and the children here?

MR. SALINGER: They are.

Q. And also the President's father?

MR. SALINGER: I would have to check that. I think he left.

Q. Are there any social plans for the evening at the White House?

MR. SALINGER: No. I mean, there are no plans today. I will just have to deal with it on a day-by-day basis.

Q. Pierre, are there any plans to bone up Civil Defense?

MR. SALINGER: To bone up Civil Defense? What does that question mean?

Q. Well, any plans to firm it up and make it more effective?

MR. SALINGER: I am sure our Civil Defense people are working on their plans.

Q. It was brought out last night that it may be woefully inefficient, I mean neglected, since the Congress didn't give them all the funds that they asked for, and they might now be needed.

MR. SALINGER: There is no question that the Congress did not appropriate the funds that the President asked them for and urged them to appropriate on a number of occasions, but they

message that the President sent to Khrushchev yesterday along with a copy of his speech?

MR. SALINGER: No, I cannot.

Q. Was it sent? Was a message sent?

MR. SALINGER: There was a message, as the State Department pointed out last night. There was a message to Chairman Khrushchev with the speech, which was given to Ambassador Dobrynin.

Q. Pierre, this document that Ambassador Kohler was handed in Moscow this morning is not a direct, personal reply to the President's communication, but, rather, a statement by the Soviet Government?

MR. SALINGER: My indication is, and the only thing so far I can go on really, is wire copy, as we have not yet had a report back from Ambassador Kohler. But the indication is that they handed them a copy of the statement which they at that time released to the press simultaneously.

Q. This is not the personal, formal reply.

Q. Can you give us any indication yet of the train of events that happened after Tuesday morning?

MR. SALINGER: I cannot at this time.

Q. Just one matter. Rusk was here this morning for the tail end of this session?

MR. SALINGER: That is correct.

Q. Has the President been in telephonic contact personally since last Tuesday with de Gaulle, Macmillan, or Adenauer?

MR. SALINGER: I would rather not comment on that.

Q. Can you tell us -- you said the telegrams were running 12 to 1 for the President -- if there was any notable organization or any name among the objectors?

MR. SALINGER: I haven't had a chance to look through the 4000 telegrams, so I couldn't tell you that.

Q. Pierre, why the delay on that formal statement coming through when you have gotten it on the wire?

MR. SALINGER: It may be in by now. When I left here to talk to you it had not physically been received at the White House. It could very well be in the State Department.

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MR. SALINGER: There is no question that the Congress did not appropriate the funds that the President asked them for and urged them to appropriate on a number of occasions, but they are operating within the framework of what they have, and they are active.

Q. But no plans to strengthen it that you know of now?

MR. SALINGER: They are active at the present time.

Q. Can you give us any information about the letter or

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Q. Pierre, can you give us any indication of the response of our allies, particularly Britain, France, Germany, the NATO allies, to this action?

MR. SALINGER: I wouldn't want to give you any private communications they have had with the President. I think most of them have commented publicly in their own capitals.

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Q. Is there any White House theory you can guide us on as to why Cuba did not camouflage these missile sites? There is no explanation?

MR. SALINGER: I am definitely not a military expert.

Q. Pierre, to go back to your answer to Bob's question, were there private communications following the President's informing our allied leaders?

MR. SALINGER: I wouldn't comment on that, Ned.

Q. I didn't ask you -- you said you wouldn't comment on the nature of the private communications.

MR. SALINGER: I wouldn't comment on whether he even received any. That is one step further.

Q. Can you comment on Diefenbaker's proposal about the NATO countries --

MR. SALINGER: No, I can't.

Q. Are you through commenting?

MR. SALINGER: Pretty much.

Q. Two all the military dependents are safely evacuated from Guantanamo Bay?

MR. SALINGER: I think you would have to ask the Defense Department that specific question. It wasn't decided if or where they move, but I would prefer you get that answer from the Defense Department.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

MR. SALINGER: There is a lid now, until 2:00.

END